



## ACTING PRESIDENT'S STATEMENT ON SYSTEMIC RACISM

"There are still many phases to come after the protestors go home, the tear gas smoke has cleared and the bruises from the rubber bullets healed. We must fight for policy reform, in order for the full and complete measure of justice and equality to be instituted, that must also include other parts of society and that goes well beyond policing.

Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) must have the same opportunities and live the same realities as Caucasians. They must have the same access to mortgages and housing, to an education system that isn't broken, proper access to nutrition and medical care; equality within our justice system, etc. The list is very long. They must have access to all of the advantages white people have access to everyday, that we may not even realize. All people must have the same rights as the next.

Why aren't we turning our minds to reparations as well? We have to stop doing half measures and actually be meaningful in our next steps. A whole and complete change and shift in what we do, our actions must be louder than our words if we are to actually realize the change we are inhaling gas and taking bullets for. There's no stopping us now."

— Donna Hokiro, Acting President

>>> **In case you missed it:** Read our [Statement on the George Floyd protests](#)

"The USW condemns racism in all its forms and the racist violence that has occurred on both sides of the border. We stand in solidarity with Black communities around the globe. What happened to George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor and so many unarmed black people is unacceptable. Here in Canada, we are angered and heartbroken by the recent tragic deaths of Regis Korchinski-Paquet, D'Andre Campbell and Chantel Moore during encounters with police in Toronto, Brampton and Edmundston, New Brunswick." Read the full USW statement at <https://1944.fyi/8s3>

## GET INVOLVED!

Things you can do to become an ally:

- Get in touch with Local 1944's Civil and Human Rights Committee
- Engage the conversation with your employer about hiring more Black, Indigenous and people of colour
- Work with and support organizations such as the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists (CBTU)
- Stand up and speak out on your own against racist comments and jokes in our communities and workplaces
- Be an ally to Black, Indigenous and workers of colour in your workplace
- Participate in online workshops on anti-racism
- Educate yourself, donate, support and follow, using the USW Anti-Black Racism and Anti-Racism Resources

## BENEVOLENT SOCIETY ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Thanks to those of you who attended the Annual General Meeting of the Telecommunications Workers Union Benevolent Society on May 28, 2020, held virtually for the first time via Zoom webconference.

For those of you who don't know, the Benevolent Society is a savings fund to promote the interests of members of USW Local 1944. As such, it serves as a strike and defence fund for the Local, while we are also able to use the broader USW International Strike and Defence Fund.

The Benevolent Society also owns some of the Local's offices, and it pays out retirement gifts of up to \$1,000 for members who are eligible. Finally, the Benevolent Society occasionally pays

for one-time special projects of the Local, most recently the Local's 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebrations across the country.

At the AGM, members heard that the Society's Funds are in great shape with Society net assets at about \$22M dollars. These net assets grew by about \$500,000 in 2019, despite our 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebrations and the Society's many other expenses.

I provided an update regarding the state of the Society's investments during the COVID-19 crisis, stating that the negative effects have been minimal due to the cautious nature of our investments.

The Local should be confident having such a strong savings fund as we head in to bargaining with Telus at the end of 2021.

— Michael Phillips, Secretary-Treasurer

# EFFECTS OF THE PANDEMIC IN OUR LIVES

## TAKE ACTION AGAINST ATTACKS ON PUBLIC EDUCATION IN ALBERTA!

>>> **Tell your MLA** you are opposed to the UCP's attacks on public education, including the lay off of 20,000 Education Workers.

## PROTECT CHILD CARE!

The pandemic has put the future of Canadian child care services in danger. The USW asks every member to get involved and push for quality, public and accessible child care throughout the country.

Sign your support for the Save Child Care from COVID-19 plan at [childcareforall.ca](http://childcareforall.ca)

## ATTACKS ON PUBLIC EDUCATION IN ALBERTA DURING COVID-19

As Albertans are going through the COVID-19 pandemic, the UCP government is using the crisis to push their privatization agenda forward in education, through Bill 15: 'Choice in Education Act'.

According to the Alberta Federation of Labour, "Bill 15, under the guise of parental 'choice' is a clear attack on public education, on publicly elected school boards, and undermines the rights of the child." An example of this is that a few weeks ago, Minister Adriana LaGrange announced that she would dissolve the democratically elected Calgary Board of Education by the end of November this year.

**What do these attacks on public education mean?** They encourage those who can afford it to leave the public school system, driving them towards private or online education, while only the poorest of the population will be left with no choice but to enrol their children in defunded and means-deprived public schools.

**For more information, read the Alberta Federation of Labour blog series on public education during a crisis.**

## DID YOU ANSWER THE COVID-19 CHECK-IN SURVEY YET?

We are all impacted by the effects of COVID-19, personally and at work. We are asking that you provide your Union a better sense of how you are being affected, so that we can improve our efforts to help and advocate for your improved working conditions.

The survey is seeking information on working conditions as well as your health and well being.

Provide your feedback at <https://1944.fyi/C19feedback>



## WEARING A MASK DURING PERIODS OF HEAT STRESS

Being exposed to heat can cause various effects, from thermal discomfort to heatstroke. According to the [Robert-Sauve Organizational Health and Safety Research Institute \(IRSST\)](#), wearing a mask during periods of heat stress does not increase the body temperature, however it can create a sensation of discomfort.

### The following recommendations aim to improve comfort for workers wearing masks during periods of heat stress:

- Choose a mask designed with the most breathable material AND filtration efficiency. A breathable material will reduce the air humidity produced by your breath inside the mask.
- Breathing through the nose (closed mouth) when wearing the mask will produce less heat and humidity trapped in the mask — please note that nasal breathing can only be maintained during weak to moderate physical exertion.
- Change your mask when it becomes wet due to breathing or sweating, or when it gets dirty.
- Wear a mask when physical distancing measures cannot be respected.

Here are additional recommendations that can improve your comfort while wearing a mask:

- Cleanse your face before and after wearing a mask. If you are using a reusable mask, wash it with warm water and soap after each use.
- Reduce heat-related discomfort by cooling your forehead and neck, even when wearing the mask.
- In indoor workplaces, provide adequate ventilation and turn on air conditioning, if applicable.

Regardless if you are wearing a mask or not, during periods of high heat it is important to **stay well hydrated, and insist on taking the breaks you need in order to cope with the heat.**

## HEALTH AND SAFETY: KNOW YOUR RIGHTS DURING COVID-19!

**Watch** the United Steelworkers' video of a webinar covering three important rights for all workers: the right to know, the right to participate and the right to refuse unsafe work.

# STEELWORKERS VOTE

## BILL 61, EXPLOITING THE COVID-19 CRISIS IN QUEBEC

The provincial government of Quebec has tabled Bill 61 ostensibly as part of the Quebec economic recovery plan, made necessary by the COVID-19 crisis. The bill would authorize Francois Legault's government to circumvent existing laws, which couldn't be challenged by citizens anymore. According to the Quebec Federation of Labour (FTQ), "this bill would weaken several checks and balances, including labour laws, environmental standards, anti-corruption policies and multiple laws and regulations. It would limit parliamentarians' ability to screen new bills."

The political opposition and unions see this bill as a pretext for the government to assume new powers permanently, under the cover of the state of emergency.

### An anti-democratic drift

"Bill 61 threatens accountability and fundamental rights. Through this bill, the Quebec government gives itself judicial immunity which prevents any contestation or recourse before the courts, while maintaining a state of emergency for a period of two years, that would give it the power to limit other rights under the pretext of the pandemic. This looks very much like an antidemocratic move," said Daniel Boyer, President of the FTQ.

The bill also allows for the acceleration of expropriation procedures, jeopardizing owners' right to claim a fair value for their property by suppressing their right of objection.



## ALBERTA: BILL 1 IS AN ATTACK ON CITIZENS' RIGHTS

The provincial government of Alberta has passed Bill 1 on May 28, 2020, also called the Critical Infrastructure Defence Act. Its official goal is to protect "essential infrastructure by creating offences for trespassing, interfering with operations or causing damage."

The Alberta Federation of Labour claims with Bill 1, they "expect the Kenney government to encourage the police to act sooner and more aggressively to limit unions' freedom of assembly and expression. This will exacerbate and lengthen labour disputes or protests."

According to [Arthur Noskey](#), Grand Chief of the Treaty 8 First Nations of Alberta, Bill 1 "violates Indigenous and treaty rights and will aggravate tensions between police and Indigenous people."

"This bill will make it legal to detain citizens who attend a protest or rally while trying to hold the provincial government to account," said Donna Hokiro, Acting President. "This affects all people who would like to be heard on issues that are of importance to them regardless of political stripe. This is a blatant abuse of power that undermines fundamental rights and freedoms, a new low bar for the UCP, beyond disgraceful."

## ALBERTA'S MINIMUM WAGE IS AT RISK!

There are currently more than 350,000 Albertans earning \$15 per hour – most of whom are women, young people or racialized workers. Over 50% of minimum wage earners are adults, and 40% of them have kids. As we struggle to get our economy back on its feet again, taking money out of the pockets of ordinary Albertans makes no sense.

**Join the Alberta Federation of Labour's "15 is Fair campaign" and ask Premier Kenney to cancel his plan to cut Alberta's minimum wage.**

**TAKE ACTION NOW!**

## MEMBERS HAVE THE FLOOR

"I worked for BCTEL then Telus from November 1988 to April 30, 2020, when I retired. I have collected two very nice pension cheques since then, and am very grateful to have had outstanding Union representation during the length of my career.

I have absolutely no doubt my day-to-day work quality of life and all compensations wages, time off, sick pay, and all the human rights dignities I was afforded were the direct result of a well-organized, dedicated effort by the Brothers and Sisters of my Local Union that represented us throughout our careers. To each and every Local Union Representative, a heartfelt thank you.

Brother Pasqualetto suggested that I contact you as I am eligible for a retirement gift, so thanks again!" – *James Allinson, retired from Unit 31*

**DO YOU HAVE QUESTIONS ABOUT YOUR RETIREMENT RIGHTS?**

**Contact your Local Union office at [contact@usw1944.ca](mailto:contact@usw1944.ca)**

# USW LOCAL 1944 SCHOLARSHIPS 2020

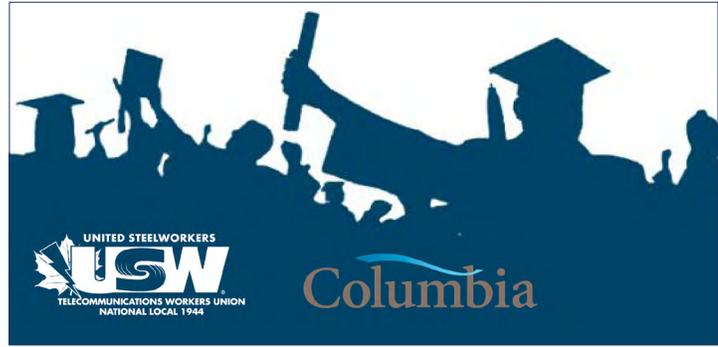
## SEIZE THE OPPORTUNITY FOR FINANCIAL AID FOR POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

The annual USW Local 1944 scholarships consists of:

- 3 educational scholarships of \$750
- 4 scholarships of \$1,000 for any post-secondary public institution

For inquiries, please contact the Columbia Institute at (604) 408-2500 or [info@columbiainstitute.ca](mailto:info@columbiainstitute.ca). More information [here](#).

The application deadline is Saturday, August 1<sup>st</sup>, 2020.



zoom



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ALL UNIT MEETINGS WILL BE CONDUCTED BY ZOOM WEBCONFERENCE UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE

Access your Unit Meeting in one click!

Simply follow the link provided in your meeting notice, and enter your meeting ID. You can also call-in using the toll-free number.

Stay connected. Stay safe.

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